

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----182235Z 070594 /73

R 182018Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8388
INFO USMISSION USBERLIN
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USMISSION NATO

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 08612

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR PGOV GW GE WB
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S CONVERSATION WITH WEHNER ON
INNER-GERMAN AND BERLIN MATTERS

SUMMARY. SPD LEADER HERBERT WEHNER, DURING MY CALL ON HIM TODAY, SHOWED CONSIDERABLE IRRITATION AND EVEN BITTERNESS ABOUT THE STATE OF FRG-GDR RELATIONS BUT SOUNDED OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE NEW MAYOR OF BERLIN. ON DOMESTIC FRG AFFAIRS, HE APPEARED MORE RELAXED THOUGH IT IS UNCERTAIN WHETHER WE SHOULD INTERPRET THIS AS A SIGN THAT HE BELIEVES THINGS ARE GOING WELL OR THAT HE BELIEVES THE DETERIORATION CAN NOT BE ARRESTED. END SUMMARY.

1. DURING MY CALL ON SPD LEADER HERBERT WEHNER TODAY, HE COMMENTED ON THE FOLLOWING SUBJECTS:

SCHMIDT'S REMARKS ABOUT THE WALL
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2. WEHNER REACTED INTENSELY WHEN I ASKED HIM WHAT HE THOUGHT OF THE RECENT SCHMIDT-HONECKER EXCHANGE ABOUT THE BERLIN WALL (IN WHICH SCHMIDT HAD DESCRIBED THE WALL AS A SIGN OF FAILURE AND HONECKER HAD PRAISED IT AS A GREAT GOOD). WEHNER, REMINISCING ABOUT THE WEST GERMAN AND ALLIED FAILURE TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT THE WALL IN

1961, OBSERVED THAT "CHEAP REMARKS" WOULD NOT CHANGE REALITY. HE DESCRIBED THE WALL AS REALITY AND AS A "BORDER BETWEEN TWO MILITARY BLOCS." HE OBSERVED THAT MOST IMPORTANT POLICY OBJECTIVE NOW IS TO MAKE THE WALL "POROUS" BUT THAT WE WILL HAVE TO LEAVE IT TO OUR HEIRS TO REMOVE.

MAYOR STOBBE

3. WEHNER SPOKE WARMLY OF STOBBE, SAYING THAT STOBBE WAS A GOOD MAN WHO HAD AT LEAST AN EVEN CHANCE TO CORRECT THE PROBLEMS OF THE SPD PARTY IN BERLIN. HE ALSO PRAISED STOBBE'S GENERAL ATTITUDE ABOUT HOW TO RESOLVE THE PROBLEMS OF THE CITY IN ITS RELATIONS WITH THE GDR. HE OBSERVED THAT HE WOULD HAVE WISHED STOBBE TWO MORE YEARS AS SENATOR, BUT THAT SINCE THIS WAS NOT TO BE HE (WEHNER) WAS GOING TO TRY TO HELP STOBBE AND HAD PERSONALLY DECIDED TO SEND OLAF SUND, WHOM HE HAD REGARDED AS A FUTURE SPD LEADER HERE, TO BE A SENATOR IN BERLIN.

THE UPCOMING FRG-GDR NEGOTIATIONS

4. ON THIS ISSUE, AS ON THE WALL, WEHNER'S IRRITATION AND BITTERNESS SHOWED VERY OPENLY. HE SAID THERE HAD BEEN TOO MUCH TALK IN THE PRESS AND BY THE CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE ABOUT WHAT THE FRG WOULD PROPOSE. SPREADING HIS ARMS, HE SAID THERE HAD BEEN FAR TOO MANY FILES BUT NOT ENOUGH CONCRETE THOUGHT ABOUT THE GOALS THE
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NEGOTIATIONS SHOULD REACH.

5. WEHNER SAID THAT HE BELIEVED IT WAS NOW NO LONGER POSSIBLE FOR THE UPCOMING NEGOTIATIONS TO COME TO A SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION UNLESS THERE WERE A MEETING OF THE "TWO HIGHEST PERSONALITIES" (OBVIOUSLY SCHMIDT AND HONECKER) TO SET THE BROAD FRAMEWORK. HE ADDED THAT, SPEAKING CONFIDENTIALLY, HE KNEW THAT HONECKER HAD INDICATED HIS READINESS TO MEET AT ANY TIME BUT THAT SCHMIDT HAD SAID THIS WAS NOT AN OPPORTUNE MOMENT.

FRG DOMESTIC POLITICS

6. WHEN I ASKED WEHNER ABOUT A REMARK HE REPORTEDLY MADE IN AN INTERVIEW TO A GERMAN MAGAZINE REGARDING THE WEAK CONDITION OF THE TWO COALITION PARTIES, HE SAID THAT THIS REMARK SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN OUT OF CONTEXT. HOWEVER, INSTEAD OF TALKING ABOUT THE INTERNAL CONDITIONS OF THE PARTIES, HE LAUNCHED INTO A DISCUSSION

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OF CURRENT LEGISLATIVE PLANS. HE INDICATED THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S PENSION AND TAX PLANS HAD BEEN APPROVED BY THE BUNDESTAG, AS MIGHT BE EXPECTED, BUT THAT THEY WOULD HAVE PROBLEMS IN THE BUNDESRAT AND THAT SOME COMPROMISES WOULD HAVE TO BE MADE. HE APPEARED REMARKEDLY BLAND IN DISCUSSING THIS ISSUE, ALMOST RESIGNED, AND CONCLUDED WITH THE OBSERVATION THAT "I BELIEVE THAT ONE MUST TAKE THINGS AS THEY ARE GIVEN."

COMMENT

7. WEHNER'S INTENSE IRRITATION WHEN DEALING WITH INNER-GERMAN MATTERS MAY REFLECT HIS UNHAPPINESS AT DEVELOPMENTS AND PROSPECTS AS WELL AS THE DEGREE TO WHICH SO MANY OTHERS ARE NOW INVOLVED IN A SUBJECT OVER WHICH HE ONCE HAD ALMOST EXCLUSIVE DOMINANCE. IT IS CURIOUS, HOWEVER, THAT HIS IRRITATION IS ALWAYS WITH HIS OWN COLLEAGUES. FOR EXAMPLE, THOUGH
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SCHMIDT'S REFUSAL TO DEAL WITH HONECKER MAY BE BASED ON THE RECENT DISCOVERY OF YET ANOTHER GDR SPY IN THE CHANCELLERY, HONECKER MADE NO MENTION OF THAT EAST GERMAN FAUX-PAS.

8. THERE ARE MANY RUMORS IN BONN THAT WEHNER IS DISCOURAGED, GLOOMY ABOUT THE COALITION'S PROSPECTS, AND PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THE COALITION LASTING FOR EVEN A YEAR. HE DID NOT PORTRAY ANY SUCH FEELINGS TODAY, BUT THE MOOD OF RESIGNATION WITH WHICH HE DISCUSSED DOMESTIC MATTERS COULD BE INTERPRETED AS A SIGN THAT HE DOES, INDEED, SEE LITTLE CAUSE OR HOPE TO CONTINUE THE FIGHT. OUR JUDGMENT AT THIS POINT, HOWEVER, IS THAT THIS WOULD BE AN OVER-INTERPRETATION. FROM THE WAY WEHNER TALKED ABOUT INNER-GERMAN AFFAIRS, IT WOULD HARDLY SEEM LIKELY THAT HE WOULD BE READY TO LET THINGS BE HANDLED BY THE OPPOSITION PARTIES. END COMMENT.
STOESSEL

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